



Lesson 1:

The basics

Introduction

In this lesson we'll deal with the basics of playing the piano.

How is a piece of music formed? How do you learn to play a piece of music in a short period of time?

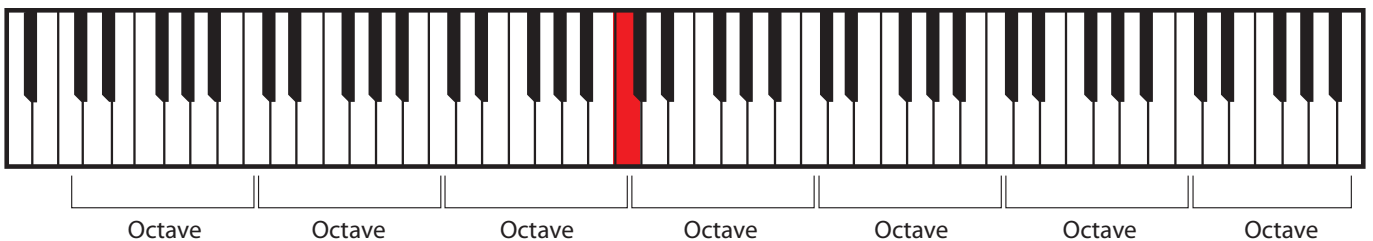


First of all, watch the video 'The basics'



Chapter 1 - The keyboard

The piano keyboard consists of a number of black and white keys. These keys form a specific pattern. After every seven white keys, the pattern repeats itself. This is called an octave.

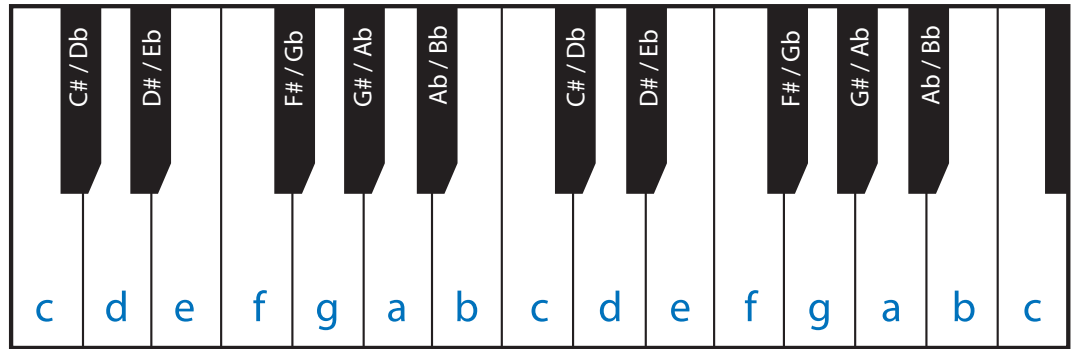


The keys on a piano and those on a keyboard are virtually identical. However, a piano has two more octaves than a keyboard. Every white key bears the name of a letter. Because every octave consists of the same keys, seven letters are used: A to G. The black keys use the same letter names but a suffix is added. We'll come back to that, though.

The key, marked in red, is called '**middle C**'. This is the most central C key on the keyboard. It is the left, white key. Many pieces of music start here.



Hint: *Paste a sticker onto middle C so you'll always know where to find it! You may also paste stickers on various other white keys, for example the keys for the three middle chords, in order to find these keys easily. This will help you in the beginning. See the following example.*



Here we clearly see that a new octave begins after every seven keys. The black keys have the same letter names as the white keys to their left and right. However, the suffix –sharp or –flat is added to the letter name.

In the example we have described the black keys as you would pronounce them. The way of writing the letter names is different, though. Black key names ending with –sharp are indicated by a '#'. Those ending with –flat are indicated by a 'b'.

Notes followed by # increase in pitch by a semitone and notes followed by b decrease in pitch by a semitone.

So, the A-sharp/B-flat key is described in writing as A# or Bb. Which note to use depends on the key that the music is written in, but we'll deal with that later.



Exercise 1

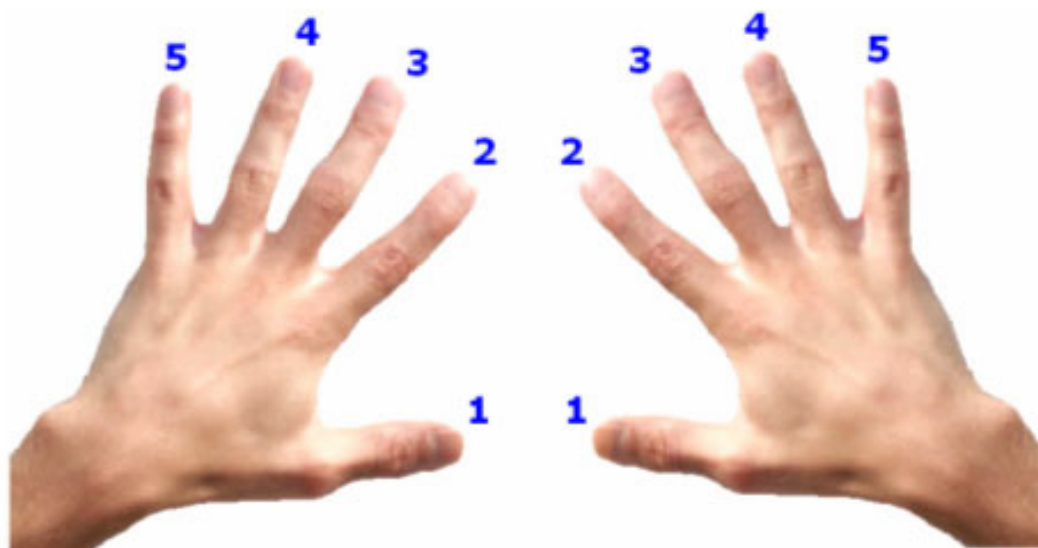
Study the names of the white keys. Do you know where to find middle C? Play all the C keys on the keyboard. Do you hear that they all sound similar in their higher and lower octaves? Next, play the all the keys belonging to the different notes on the piano. Start with C and play all the C's from low to high. Continue with C# , then D

The difference in pitch between keys is half a tone. Thus, between F and F# the difference is a semitone. Because B and C are found next to each other, the difference between them is also a semitone. The difference between G and A, though, is a full tone.



Chapter 2 **The position of your hands**

Before you start playing the piano it's important to learn which fingers to use to press the keys. Initially you might be tempted to use your index fingers to play all the notes. However, it would be impossible to play complicated pieces in this manner. For your convenience we've numbered the fingers.



Exercise 2

Study the numbers and the way these numbers correspond with the fingers. You will benefit from this later in the lesson.



Next week

In lesson 2 you'll learn to play chords. A chord accompanies the melody and consists of three or more notes played simultaneously. The C-chord is played using the C, E and G keys. Press these keys, using fingers 1, 3 and 5, and you've played your first chord! You may play this with your left or your right hand.

Don't forget to practice what you've learnt in this lesson. The basics are very important. It's ideal to practice for about a quarter of an hour a day. Good luck!